

> ACHIEVEMENTS

The learning review of the SABI Programme found that overall, citizen demand for improved services can result in better education, health care, and social protection when citizens are accompanied by an integrated programme of support. The SABI programme moved citizens through a process of survey, situation analysis, prioritization of needs, understanding of how to get the changes they seek, and accompaniment through ward, district, and even national levels. The programme successfully countered citizen feelings of disempowerment and apathy, and strengthened their ability to hold service providers and local authorities to account. SABI's patient approach was key and achievements were based on the trust built among citizens and local authorities and service providers.

Supported by Christian Aid and the consortium, effective partners targeted and built relationships with communities and at all levels of government to achieve these results. The programme fostered a culture of partnership and collaboration between citizens, service providers and government officials. Adaptive methods geared toward learning, capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and gender equality and social inclusion were also fundamental to SABI's achievements. Activities, including a Citizen Perception Survey (CPS) and District and National Service Summits, served as a platform for dialogue across hierarchies and set a precedent for transparency. There was broad consensus among participants and outside observers that District Councils, Ward Development Committees, and front-line service providers are responding more effectively to citizens.

Hundreds of local demands – such as improved service at health centres, registration of new schools with the Ministry of Education, more responsive local authorities – were successfully met. Many were not successful however, when there was a mismatch between community priorities and the ability of ward, district, and service provider staff to fulfil their demands. In most such cases, the solutions to problems lay in funding and policy issues at national level, where change moves much slower than at local level.

While the programme focussed on community, ward, and district levels, there were also notable achievements with national government. The primary one was the increased opportunity for dialogue and understanding of issues from local perspectives through National Service Summits and joint monitoring visits. By examining local demands, Citizen Perception Survey data, and national priorities, the programme focused on the production of four National Engagement Strategies (NES) in Education, Health, Social Protection, and Governance. The success of these strategies has been based on work from community level up, and on a strategic examination of what government could achieve given its priorities and resources.

AT A GLANCE SABI Programme

SABI was a multi-year citizen-led government accountability programme funded by UK Aid and led by Christian Aid designed to improve government services. Since 2016, the SABI programme worked in all 16 districts of Sierra Leone to strengthen community-led accountability. It contributed to creating a more informed and empowered citizenry, and increased awareness of, and demand for, improved service delivery.

The programme was implemented by a consortium led by Christian Aid, including Restless Development (RD), Social Development Direct (SDDirect), and Humentum from the United Kingdom, and Local Implementing Partners FOCUS 1000, Rehabilitation and Development Agency (RADA), Social Enterprise Development (SEND), and Sierra Leone Social Aid Volunteers (SLSAV). As the SABI programme has ended, Christian Aid has commissioned a review to ascertain key learnings in relation to what has worked and what has not to inform strategic thinking for uptake by Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) sister programmes and the wider sector.

> ONGOING IMPACT

Since the programme is ending, only some of the benefits are likely to be sustained. Those changes which are based in the capacity and attitudes of people are likely to carry on. Other changes which require funding or considerable organisational resources are less certain to carry on. Regardless of their value – which is high – activities like the Citizen Perception Survey (CPS), District and National Service Summit, joint monitoring visits, and small grants support are unlikely to be sustained. However, since the concepts and methods for these activities have already been worked out, institutions like government or civil society organisations could readily pick them up and carry on if they have the funding to do so.

The SABI programme facilitated the evolution of participatory action planning at District, Ward and Community levels. It catalysed the Ward Development Committees (WDCs) to engage other duty bearers for improved service delivery by preparing local action plans at the ward levels with the cooperation of chiefdoms and communities. District Councils are now incorporating these plans. As part of the decentralized system of local governance in Sierra Leone, the improved function at the ward level will continue at least for the immediate to medium term, but may fade as membership turns over if not institutionalized with encouragement from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and District Councils.

Since actions in government have the potential to affect larger numbers of people or to make more fundamental impacts, greater response at the national level would support the capacity of community level action to make sustainable systemic change to service delivery.

> RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Government

1. **Support development of a sustainable Citizen Perception Survey** for use by Ministry, Departments and Agencies, District Councils, and frontline service providers. The survey could be adapted to the amount of funding available, and integrated into planning for all service providers and policy makers.
2. **Develop a score card** based on the Citizen Perception Survey data and lessons from the programme implementation. The score card should identify key performance indicators for service providers for use by local and national authorities, citizen groups, and service providers themselves.
3. **Complete the decentralization process** to clarify and streamline decision making roles among District Councils and Ministry, Departments and Agencies. Funding and authority should be aligned so those who bear the duty to regulate and provide services have the resources available to fulfil their responsibilities.
4. **The Ministry of Basic Education and Senior Secondary Education should adopt and incorporate gender equality and social inclusion strategies and insights into its curriculum** as a long-term measure for promoting social inclusion.

General Programming Recommendations

5. **Build capacity at District Councils** through organizational development interventions with tools from the SABI programme.
6. **Build capacity of Ward Development Committees** through organizational development interventions with tools from the SABI programme.
7. **Provide support to national level policy analysis and advocacy** to align ministry policies with the demands of citizens and needs of local authorities.
8. **Support civil society organisations** to continue to promote accountability from local to national level. Support might take the form of grants programmes to support local staff and activities or promotion of networks for organizational development or advocacy.
9. Programmes to promote accountability of services should **adopt and expand the approach to gender equality and social inclusion** to promote Sustainable Development Goal 5, Achieve Gender Equality, Social Inclusion and Human Rights for all.
10. **Create a strategic communications plan** for all accountability-oriented programmes to publicize successes and spread the message that participation and accountability work can be effective.